KEITH JARRETT

Samuel Barber

Piano Concerto op. 38

Béla Bartók

Piano Concerto No. 3

Keith Jarrett

Tokyo Encore

Keith Jarrett, Piano

Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Saarbrücken

Dennis Russell Davies

New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra

Kazuyoshi Akiyama

ECM NEW SERIES

Samuel Barber
Béla Bartók
Keith Jarrett

Keith Jarrett
Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Saarbrücken
Dennis Russell Davies
New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra
Kazuyoshi Akiyama

Samuel Barber (1910–1981)

1–3 **Piano Concerto** op. 38

I Allegro appassionato	12:32
II Canzone. Moderato	6:16
III Allegro molto	7:55

Keith Jarrett, piano
Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Saarbrücken
Dennis Russell Davies, conductor

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

4–6 **Piano Concerto No. 3** Sz. 119

I Allegretto	7:42
II Adagio religioso	10:16
III Allegro vivace	9:08

Keith Jarrett, piano
New Japan Philharmonic Orchestra
Kazuyoshi Akiyama, conductor

Keith Jarrett (*1945)

7 **Tokyo Encore – Nothing But A Dream** 4:52

My Adventures With Barber and Bartók

When I was studying piano in my early childhood, I had a teacher (at one point) who told me that he thought I was talented enough to go on seriously with classical music, but that I must choose only one instrument and concentrate all my energy on it. I had also been playing violin for several years and went home hating this teacher for coming up with such a stupid idea. In addition he told me that I had to stop using the pedal and that he would only give me Bartók. Of course, he knew exactly what he was talking about (which I didn't know until much later) but I said that I would choose the piano.

Many Mikrokosmoses later, after stopping lessons, classical recitals, and entering the jazz world, I would be beginning another classical period that included, among many other composers, Bartók. I performed Bartók in Budapest (the *Children's Music*) and began working on the Bartók *2nd Piano Concerto* in the 80's, performing it with Dennis Davies among other conducters. At the time that I worked on the *2nd Piano Concerto*, I was also working on the Stravinsky *Concerto For Piano and Winds*, and the Samuel Barber *Piano Concerto*, which had been commissioned for the opening of Philharmonic Hall in New York. I loved this piece when I first heard it in the 60's and didn't realize that I would be working on it almost two decades later. I was preparing to perform it with Mr. Davies. It was written by a non-pianist, and my small hands were really not prepared for it, especially while rehearsing the other two concertos, which were technically imposing themselves (to say the least). Dennis and I performed the Barber in Saarbrücken, Germany in the 80's, and then came the more serious preparation for recording the piece with the Houston Symphony and Decca Records. Unfortunately, though I had performed these three concertos already, something terrible occurred on the ski slopes in Vermont: I fell on an icy trail in Killington and came down on my hands (still holding the ski poles). Strangely, I had just visited my brother Scott in the hospital who, only a few days before, had told me that the most common ski accident was spraining your hand falling on the ski poles. This would be the end of my ability to play the three concerti, and there would be no recording of the Barber (or, for that matter, the Bartók or the Stravinsky). I am not sure how long it took to recover enough to play the Bartók 3rd Piano Concerto, both on tour in Europe with John Eliot Gardiner and in Tokyo with Kazuyoshi Akiyama, but at least Bartók was kinder to my hands when he got older. So… what you have on this CD are the only existing recordings of my performances of these pieces.

The little bonus at the end of the Bartók is an improvised encore which I find extremely beautiful (but no relation to Bartók).

Keith Jarrett

Barber / Bartók / Jarrett

A great tree puts out a sudden side-branch, which flourishes for a while before the tree turns its energies in other directions again. Keith Jarrett's classical recordings nearly all date from the 1980s and early 1990s, and are so few that his repertoire choices become fascinating in themselves. There is, of course, a good deal of Bach, with Handel and Shostakovich alongside. At the beginning came a collaboration with Gidon Kremer on Arvo Pärt's *Fratres*, and at the end a half dozen Mozart concertos. Less well known is the interest Jarrett was showing at the time in other concertos, including those presented here.

That interest was focussed on works from his own lifetime, created by composers in the United States. Such concertos came from a world in which Jarrett was living; in a sense, they allowed him to speak of his own epoch, even while performing a work someone else had notated in detail. That they also belonged to a world in which jazz was living was part of the deal – though it was never the 'jazz concertos' of Aaron Copland, George Gershwin and others that gained Jarrett's advocacy but rather works in which the jazz presence is more subtle, part of the background against which the music is taking place.

Barber's concerto of 1960–62 exemplifies this, not only in its melodic-harmonic language but also in how it often grows through varied repetitions and partial repetitions of a tune. This happens right from the unaccompanied solo at the start, where Jarrett is able to work

with the ideas as if pushing them around, seeing where they will go and how they relate. Two gestures that initially seem to be in conflict, or even to be ignorant of each other – one bright and clamorous in the treble, the other stumbling in the bass – begin to coalesce as the latter's profile of repeated note plus tritone is taken on by the former. Of course, this is there in the score, but Jarrett, with his combination of strength and flexibility in rhythm, as well as his sense of where to place the weight or weights in a phrase, brings the whole introduction together with an improviser's alertness.

That introduction leads, with the orchestra's entry, into a bold, bright-dark sonata movement in E minor, begun by the strings with a theme whose energy and pathos come partly from how it is stuck to the high B around which it keeps revolving (a note that was just given importance in the opening solo). When Jarrett's piano takes it up, it seems to have become a little more used to itself, and an element of it is even playfully toyed with in canon. Jarrett's Bach is not so far away now, and here again, as in the introduction, the light piano writing, often in two parts, suits his spring and agility. Nice, too, is how he bows out.

The orchestra continues alone, to put forward, past a moment of alarm, the movement's secondary theme on solo oboe, repeated by the strings with more of their old anxiety, which again subsides into playfulness. After a lengthy absence the piano reappears, picks up one of the available motifs and, alone, starts drilling it intensively, in counterpoint with reversed images of itself. Someone who visited Barber at the time noted that he had printed copies of works by Schoenberg, Berg, Webern and Boulez on his desk, and this would be the moment where his study of them pays off. Often regarded as incompatible musical phenomena of the 1960s, post-Romanticism and post-serialism at this point encounter one another on common ground.

With the orchestra returning, the piano spins an element of the thematic material in an image of whirling consciousness, and the orchestra throws back what had been the piano's initiating gesture. A reprise seems to be called for, but the piano has other ideas, and soon is bursting out into a cadenza. Only after this can the strings bring back their impassioned theme and the reprise duly follow, with the piano now taking the secondary idea, to which Jarrett brings simultaneous warmth and clarity.

Barber's slow movement develops in conversation among the players all working on the one melody, a fragment of which is rotating before the whole thing is presented first by the principal flute. (Barber based this movement on an *Elegy* he wrote shortly before for flute and piano.) Extended in dialogue between flute and oboe, the tune is then taken up by the soloist, Jarrett bringing the piano in – on a broken chord of c-sharp minor, the movement's tonality – like a swimmer

joining others in calm water. The whole *Elegy* is played over a second time in altered form to create a movement in two sections, each including a moment near its end where the piano discovers a pentatonic outline to the melody and evokes the music of Bali. Here one might recall Jarrett's interest in other composers who went to the same source: Lou Harrison, who wrote a concerto for him, and Colin McPhee.

The finale, in b-flat minor, is more directly related to jazz, with Jarrett alert not only to the virtuosity of the piano part but also to how the piano must swerve and dodge between roles as solo player and accompanist. Furiously driven, the main material comes to a wonderful crash before the first of two slower, calmer, harmonically exotic episodes, returning between them and then again, at first discretely, as the second draws towards its close. The energy, though, goes right through.

In its crushed harmonies and its ostinatos this movement tips its cap to Bartók and Prokofiev, and so prepares for the recording that follows of the former's Third Piano Concerto – except that this late work comes from a phase of relative tranquillity in Bartók's life. As well as by age and experience, the music's character may have been conditioned by the fact it was destined for the composer's wife, Ditta Pásztory. Writing the piece when he was in declining health, Bartók probably knew he had little hope of hearing it, let alone playing it, and when he died, in September 1945, there were still seventeen bars of the finale to be orchestrated, a task undertaken by his friend Tibor Serly. Yet another factor contributing to the work's benignity may have been Bartók's search for a new style, suited to his new location in the United States and to an era of peace – as it seemed, when almost nobody could foresee the Cold War, whose dangerous tensions are perhaps to be sensed in the Barber concerto.

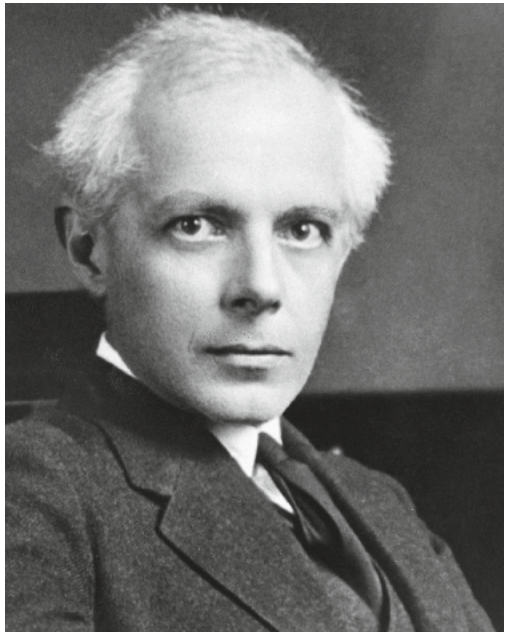
To be in America, for Bartók, was to be in the land not only of peace but also of jazz, at least as he understood it through his work with Benny Goodman, and the first movement of this concerto is an émigré's dream, treating a Hungarian melody with some of the looseness of improvisation. Jarrett, of course, understands this well. Unlike the Barber first movement, Bartók's keeps the solo instrument on view almost continuously, enabling Jarrett again to glide between roles. The wistful first subject is his; the second opens into more interplay with the woodwinds, sometimes syncopated and having a neatly witty close; and the development has the piano in places rather in the background – creating the sea, for example, on which the woodwinds steer in the first subject like a ship asail. In the straightforward reprise everyone appears to enjoy extending the comic coda.

Bartók's marking for his slow movement, 'Adagio religioso', perhaps may be understood as pointing to a religious model – possibly, given the serene consonance and the prominence in the melody of the

interval of a fifth, the Shaker-hymn style of Aaron Copland's recent *Appalachian Spring*. In the first stages of this movement the piano dovetails its comments into the orchestra's story, but Jarrett instantly asserts himself when he has to. He also sparks and responds to the humour of the colourful animal-call scherzo Bartók places in the middle of this movement, before returning to develop its principal substance.

In the last movement the piano is again almost omnipresent, nearly always in the foreground but with Jarrett once more deftly manoeuvring back a pace when necessary, just as the quality of his sound can change from water (notably in broken chords) to steel. Meanwhile, the two big fugal episodes, which include some of Bartók's most Bach-like writing, benefit from this pianist's ability to make canon seem spontaneous – as spontaneous as the surrounding, bounding Hungarian jazz that this performance equally brings to life.

Paul Griffiths



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JAZZ-PIANIST GEHT FREMD. Keith Jarrett (links) und Dennis Russel Davis, der das 1. Orchesterkonzert auf dem Halberg dirigiert hat. Foto: Schmidt

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classical musical scenes is one of the more important of our time.

Mr. Jarrett's performance provided the complement to Mr. Carter's project. Here was an accomplished jazz pianist who gave Barber's *Piano Concerto* a performance that was both sensitive and strong. Barber, of course, in this 1962 work, himself exhibited some influence of American rhythms and song; Mr. Jarrett closed the circle. His seriousness showed how the crossing of esthetic lines can be more than merely condescending or entertaining

New York Times, November 1983

noch — das meinten wohl auch die paar Buhrufer am Sonntagvormittag.

Zur Beschreibung seines Violinkonzertes in D wählt William Bolcom Adjektive wie traditionell, unterhaltsam, naiv. Ihnen ist nach Anhören des Stückes nicht zu widersprechen. Der diffizile und auch dankbare Geigenpart ist dem Soli-

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Im besten

Samuel Barber
Concert recording, June 3, 1984
at Congresshalle, Saarbrücken
Tonmeister: Helmut Fackler
Balance engineer: Helmut David

Béla Bartók
Concert recording, January 30, 1985
at Kan'i Hoken Hall, Tokyo,
as part of Tokyo Music Joy Festival
Engineer: unknown
Concert promoter: Toshinari Koinuma

Cover painting: Mayo Bucher
Liner photos: G. Schirmer Archives (Barber),
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